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AUTHOR Ratcliffe, Michael; Atkinson, John; Burgess, Carol; Cartner, Nadine

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ABSTRACT

This document explains how further education colleges, employment services, and other providers can develop the delivery of full-time education and training (FTET) within the United Kingdom's New Deal programs for 18- to 24-year-olds. The document identifies principles of good practice related to the following aspects of New Deal FTET: (1) transition into FTET; (2) learner-centered delivery (individual learning plans, flexible learning programs); (3) assessment and delivery of basic and key skills; (4) monitoring and tracking (trainee monitoring and follow-up, managing early leavers); (5) links with employers and work preparation (supporting students' occupational choices, job search); (6) trainee achievement and progression; (7) strategic planning and management of training; (8) staff development; and (9) quality improvement. Each of the nine aspects of New Deal FTET is examined in its own section of the document containing some or all of the following items: (1) good practice features; (2) barriers to good practice; (3) present good practice; (4) one or more case studies (including critical success factors, resources used, impacts on delivery of New Deal, and quality

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indicators); and (5) suggestions for improving practice. The following items are appended: case studies and contact details; a list of project steering group members; and a list of acronyms and abbreviations. (MN)

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developing good practice in New Deal in colleges

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Developing good practice in New Deal in colleges

Michael Ratcliffe, John Atkinson, Carol Burgess and Nadine Cartner

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Feedback should be sent to:
Information Services,
Learning and Skills Development Agency,
3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EF.
Tel 020 7962 1066 Fax 020 7962 1258
enquiries@LSDA.org.uk

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Note
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was formerly known as FEDA.

Further information
For further information on the issues discussed
in this publication please contact:
Graham Peeke, Director,
Professional and Organisational Development,
Learning and Skills Development Agency,
3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EF.
Tel 020 7840 5353
gpeeke@LSDA.org.uk

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The project was funded by the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), now the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), through the FE Standards Fund.

Finally, we gratefully acknowledge the role played by our panel of external advisers, who helped to validate and refine the findings of the project and whose names are listed in Appendix 2.

Background, introduction and good practice guidelines

Note
The terms New Deal client, learner and student are used interchangeably throughout this report reflecting the different terminology used by the Employment Services and colleges.

Our aims

These guidelines aim to show what can be done by colleges and other providers to develop the delivery of the full-time education and training (FTET) option within New Deal for 18–24 year olds. They identify key features of quality provision and principles of effective delivery, supported by examples of good practice and suggestions for further improving practice.

The guide is designed for colleges and providers of FTET New Deal programmes and the partners and organisations with which they work. It is hoped that this guide will encourage the wider partners operating within the unit of delivery to share and adopt good practice identified in this guide.

Developing quality in the FTET New Deal option

New Deal is a test of the college's ability to respond flexibly to individual needs. Problems have been experienced in providing an adequate range of options, available throughout the year, to ensure that each New Deal client has an appropriate and high quality learning experience. This requires commitment across the whole of the college.

While there are pockets of good practice in delivering the FTET option, few colleges have managed to achieve high quality in all aspects of New Deal delivery. Evidence from inspection indicates that there is significant room for improvement. This is likely to increase as unemployment reduces and the pool of people who are eligible for New Deal increasingly become the 'hard to help'.

Colleges that are most successful in delivering New Deal have effective working relationships with employers and a strong support system for the clients. Securing the active involvement of employers is difficult but essential. The converse of this is that employers are experiencing difficulty in filling vacancies, and may welcome the opportunity to take on New Deal graduates if support is provided.

The importance of developing and maintaining effective links with employers in the New Deal FTET option was highlighted recently by the then Secretary of State for Education and Employment, David Blunkett, in *Colleges for excellence and innovation* (DfEE November 2000). He stated: 'We are helping colleges to form links with employers to deliver New Deal. However, I want to see colleges – and the businesses who have much to gain – doing a great deal more to link learning with labour market opportunities and with the skill needs of different sectors and those who work in them.' These guidelines take account of the Secretary of State's recommendations in their advice on quality improvement.

The project's approach

Priority areas for improvement

The Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) recognised the need to develop colleges' capacity to play a full part in the effective delivery of New Deal and commissioned LSDA to search for examples of good practice and provide advice on how to improve practice.

Training Standards Council (TSC) inspections of New Deal FTET revealed several key areas that needed to be addressed:

- diagnostic evaluation of basic, key, vocational and employability skills
- links with employers and local employment prospects
- work preparation, job search and work experience
- individual action planning and learning programmes
- flexible provision – both roll-on/roll-off and flexible completion
- client monitoring and tracking
- staff development and awareness raising.

The project therefore concentrated attention on identifying and describing good practice in these areas.

While a strength of New Deal is its emphasis on partnership activities, this can also present difficulties. This is especially the case where colleges have not been actively involved in the planning of strategy within the unit of delivery. It is therefore important to ensure that the individual components of the partnership support each other to ensure that standards are raised across the unit of delivery. The project has therefore also attempted to provide guidance on how to bring together all players in the identification and dissemination of good practice and to consider how better joint working is achieved.

Methodology

LSDA worked in partnership with the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and the Association for College Management (ACM), with funding and support from FEFC's Standards Fund, to:

- draft criteria for good practice in the identified priority areas
- identify colleges that could demonstrate good practice in these areas to work with other colleges that wished to improve their practice
- support these colleges in an audit and peer perusal process
- refine the criteria, secure examples of good practice and suggest ways in which practice could be improved.

How the guidelines and case studies were produced

Colleges delivering the New Deal FTET option and whose provision had been inspected by the TSC were invited to take part in the project as either a lead or partner college.

Lead colleges had significant expertise in one or more of the priority areas and were charged with sharing this with a maximum of three other partner colleges wishing to develop practice in the same area. They also considered how other aspects of their New Deal offer could be improved.

Partner colleges developed one or more areas of provision identified in their action plan (following New Deal unit of delivery inspection), by working with a designated lead college through a peer perusal process. Briefing seminars were held for all the colleges, to introduce the project method and the good practice criteria, and to review progress.

All colleges completed an audit of their provision against draft criteria from which the principles of good practice were derived, and identified one or more areas of good practice. Lead colleges were visited by the project coordinator to ratify and agree these audits, and were matched with partner colleges wishing to develop the same area. Partner colleges forwarded their audit to their lead college to prepare for the initial meeting to share current good practice.

Following the exchange of audits a peer perusal process between lead and partner colleges was undertaken. Lead colleges described and demonstrated their existing good practice to other colleges in the project. Support and monitoring visits by the coordinator and project management team were undertaken to ensure partner colleges received the appropriate level of support.

Colleges were encouraged to convene network meetings with partner organisations within the unit of delivery to identify other practice that could improve the FTET option.

Colleges self-assessed their strengths and weaknesses against the priority areas. Where good or innovative practice was identified, a case study to identify critical success factors was produced and its impact on provision described.

How to use the guidelines

The guidelines are intended to help New Deal coordinators and practitioners to assess and improve the quality and effectiveness of their delivery and identity strategies to develop provision. They can be used at several levels:

- by individual practitioners, looking to improve and develop practice
- by the whole college or training organisation, looking to improve the service to New Deal clients
- by local teams, to audit current provision and plan improvements
- by partners working with other colleges and providers to promote shared joint working and shared understanding of FTET.

The guidelines do not cover every aspect of good practice in FTET New Deal, but relate to priority areas emerging from this project and endorsed by the project Advisory Group. The guidelines are concerned with:

- transition into FTET
- learner-centred delivery
- assessment and delivery of basic and key skills
- monitoring and tracking
- links with employers and work preparation
- trainee achievement and progression
- strategic planning and management of training
- staff development
- quality improvement.

The guide describes current good practice in college provision and illustrates this with case study examples. These case studies are not always exclusive to one area and often cover several headings. The relationship between the principles of good practice and the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) is shown in on pages 5–10. However, there is inevitably some overlap between these areas.

Each section of the report focuses on:

- typical problems arising within the areas
- examples of current good practice illustrated by case studies
- further suggestions for improving good practice.

Good practice guidelines

Note
The number in brackets after the standard statement in the second column refers to the relevant section of the *Common Inspection Framework* (ALI/OFSTED March 2001)

Principles of good practice in New Deal FTET	Cross reference to standards specified by the Common Inspection Framework	Notes for action plan
1 Transition into FTET		
1 (a) Learning opportunities at college are effectively marketed to New Deal personal advisers (NDPAs) and trainees	Partnerships with other providers and relevant agencies involved in advice and guidance are effective (6)	
1 (b) Induction into FTET provision is well articulated with the Gateway process and builds on the assessment and goal setting activities of Gateway	Partnership with other providers and relevant agencies involved in advice and guidance are effective (6) Initial assessment provides an accurate basis on which to plan an appropriate programme of work (4)	
1 (c) Programme decisions (qualifications, options, etc) are discussed with each trainee who has clear information and realistic expectations	Impartial guidance enables learners to choose the course or programme that is right for them (6)	
1 (d) Trainees are fully briefed on their entitlement (what they can expect of college) and their responsibilities (what college expects of them)	Induction programmes enable learners to settle into their programmes quickly, to understand their rights and responsibilities and the demands of the course or programme (6)	
2 Learner-centred delivery		
2 (a) An individual action plan, negotiated with each trainee and based on their personal and learning needs, sets specific goals and what the trainee needs to do to achieve them	Learners understand and are confident in what they are doing, how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve (2) Learners apply effort to succeed with their work, work productively and make effective use of their time (2)	

Principles of good practice in New Deal FTET	Cross reference to standards specified by the Common Inspection Framework	Notes for action plan
2 Learner-centred delivery		
2 (b) Excellent guidance enables trainees to determine their vocational direction, job aspirations and progression route	Learners are prepared for effective participation in the workplace and the community (1)	
2 (c) Teaching and learning takes account of individual learning programmes based on each trainee's vocational aptitudes, abilities and aspirations	Teachers and trainers, with learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment, that are reviewed and updated regularly (2) Teachers and trainers use methods and styles of teaching and training consistent with the aims of their programmes and learners' personal objectives (2)	
2 (d) Flexible access to learning programmes is available, well structured and well managed	The curriculum or programmes of work are socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunities for learners (5)	
2 (e) Appropriate, up-to-date and sufficient resources are available to support vocational learning	Specialist equipment and materials are used, including facilities that are relevant to the workplace and which meet current industrial needs (3)	
2 (f) The content and context of learning programmes relate closely to real vocational environments	Learners are prepared for effective participation in the workplace and the community (1) Programmes of work take account of community and employer needs (5)	
2 (g) Learning programme delivery offers trainees opportunities to develop and apply practical skills	Resources are used to best effect in promoting learning (3)	
2 (h) Generic skills training is available	Learners have access to an appropriate range of courses or programmes, and, where appropriate, achieve suitable qualifications (5)	

Principles of good practice in New Deal FTET	Cross reference to standards specified by the Common Inspection Framework	Notes for action plan
2 Learner-centred delivery		
2 (i) Bespoke skills training is available	Learners have access to an appropriate range of courses or programmes, and, where appropriate, achieve suitable qualifications (5)	
2 (j) Appropriate learning and pastoral support are available	Support arrangements are planned and managed coherently (6)	
2 (k) All staff working	Learners' achievements towards with trainees have access learning goals and qualifications to individual action plans are recorded and accredited (4)	
2 (l) Individual action plans are monitored, reviewed and updated	Teachers and trainers, with learners, develop individual learning plans, informed by initial assessment, that are reviewed and updated regularly (2)	
3 Assessment and delivery of basic and key skills		
3 (a) Trainees' initial basic and key skills competence is assessed, and these assessments inform the individuals' learning programme	Individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners receive effective additional support throughout their training (6)	
3 (b) Opportunities are available for individual support for basic and key skill needs, and used as appropriate	Learners have effective personal support to help them to complete their course or programme, including access to specialist support services (6)	
3 (c) Basic and key skills are developed and regularly assessed during the programme; progress is discussed with trainees	Learners reach appropriate levels in key skills consistent with their main programme of study or training (1)	
3 (d) Basic skills delivery is based on national standards; basic skills national tests and qualifications are available, and used as appropriate	Learners have access to an appropriate range of course or programmes and, where appropriate, achieve suitable qualifications (5)	

Principles of good practice in New Deal FTET	Cross reference to standards specified by the Common Inspection Framework	Notes for action plan
4 Monitoring and tracking		
4 (a) Effective arrangements are in place across the unit of delivery for sharing information on trainees' attendance, progress, support needs and achievement	Those with a legitimate interest, such as employers or parents, are clearly and regularly informed about learners' progress (4)	
4 (b) Management information systems produce reliable, accurate and current data, which is used to inform the monitoring and tracking process	The information needs of managers and other staff are met and management information is used effectively to the benefit of learners (7)	
4 (c) Trainee attendance, retention, progress and achievement is systematically monitored, reviewed and followed up	Procedures are in place for recognising poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance early and for taking appropriate action (6)	
4 (d) Potential early leavers are detected through the monitoring, tracking and review process and offered support to secure successful completion	Procedures are in place for recognising poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance early and for taking appropriate action (6)	
4 (e) Trainee progression, eg to employment, move to further education or higher education, is recorded	Forms of assessment and recording are suitable for the courses and programmes being followed (4)	
5 Links with employers and work preparation		
5 (a) Links with a range of employers enrich learning programmes through the provision of mentors, tasters, work placements, workplace assessment and employment	Learners are prepared for effective participation in the workforce and the community (1)	

Principles of good practice in New Deal FTET	Cross reference to standards specified by the Common Inspection Framework	Notes for action plan
6 Trainee achievement and progression		
6 (a) Challenging success targets are set, monitored and achieved	Demanding targets for retention, achievement, progression and employment are set and met (7) Challenging learning goals and targets are achieved (1)	
6 (b) Regular assessment enables individual progress to be monitored and reviewed; progress and action are discussed with individual trainees	Learners make significant progress towards fulfilling their goals and their potential (1) Achievements towards learning goals and qualifications are recorded and accredited (4) Assessment is used to monitor progress and inform individual learners about how they are performing and how they might develop further (4)	
6 (c) Pre-exit advice and counselling are available to trainees	Careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards the opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies or training (6)	
6 (d) Trainees are supported towards positive progression outcomes	Learners progress to relevant further or higher education, training or employment (1)	
7 Strategic planning and management of training		
7 (a) Effective partnership across the unit of delivery promotes a cooperative culture, good communication, and clarity of roles and responsibilities	Clear direction is given through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood by staff, including subcontractors and work placement providers (7) Teachers and trainers promote good working relationships that foster learning (2)	
7(b) Strategic planning is learner centred with clear objectives and targets that are understood by all staff	Clear direction is given through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood by staff, including subcontractors and work placement providers (7)	

Principles of good practice in New Deal FTET	Cross reference to standards specified by the Common Inspection Framework	Notes for action plan
8 Staff development		
8 (a) Staff are aware of New Deal aims and local delivery arrangements, including the nature and range of needs of New Deal trainees	The professional development of staff contributes to their effectiveness (3)	
8 (b) Appropriate training opportunities ensure staff have the necessary pedagogical, subject-specific and vocational skills	Teachers and trainers show knowledge, technical competence and up-to-date expertise at a level consistent with effective teaching, training and assessment of the course or programme (2)	
9 Quality improvement		
9 (a) Self-assessment of provision against the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) statements forms the basis of analysis, target setting and action for continuous improvement	Rigorous self-assessment leads to identified priorities and challenging targets for improvement (7)	
9 (b) Feedback from trainees and employers on provider performance informs targets and improvement strategies	Quality assurance arrangements are systematic and informed by the views of all interested parties (7)	

Transition into FTET

1

Good practice features

Clients should move smoothly between the environments of the job centre, the Gateway and the college or any of the other options. This requires a considerable knowledge of what is available in each aspect of New Deal and the role of each of the partners in the unit of delivery. Areas of good practice in this respect were characterised by effective information flows between the various organisations involved in securing effective transition into the New Deal FTET. These aimed to improve the process of movement of clients between the Employment Service (ES) and the colleges, essentially through improved communication and integration of processes between the two partners.

Marketing the college offer

New Deal clients and personal advisers need to know what is on offer at the college, and also be aware of entry requirements, qualifications that may be achieved and possible progression routes.

Barriers to good practice

The main problems in effective marketing relate to the need to continually update information on courses and provision and the availability of places on courses. There are high rates of staff turnover in ES, particularly of New Deal personal advisers. Colleges therefore need to ensure that information is circulated to the appropriate people.

Present good practice

In some colleges information is prepared and updated for NDPAs and there are joint meetings for college staff and NDPAs.

> One partnership had prepared and circulated a course directory covering all partners' provision, so that NDPAs received details of all college full- and part-time courses updated throughout the year. In another case, this involved the preparation of a database identifying all consortium courses on offer to the ES. The database was lodged with the ES district office.

Different approaches are being used to encourage meetings between the college and NDPAs. These include:

- a lunch forum
- a pre-arranged programme of frequent meetings with all partners
- distributing brochures and flyers for information
- various *ad hoc*, ongoing discussions and attendance of ES at college communications meetings to update ES staff about provision.

Improving practice

Communication about the colleges' offer could be further improved by the secondment or interchange of ES and further education (FE) staff to improve understanding, the production of more posters for NDPAs and clients, the provision of course details via the internet, and more visits by college New Deal staff to job centres.

Building on the Gateway and maintaining ES links

Good practice features

Some examples of good practice features are described below:

- The transition into FTET ought to appear seamless to the clients, and not as if they are 'starting again'. Both Gateway and college staff should ensure consistency, avoid repetition, and make full use of assessments and other relevant information. For example, all screening or diagnostic evaluation and initial assessment should be passed on to the provider when the client is referred, rather than the provider having to start again.
- Options and programme outcomes such as qualifications, should be discussed with the clients to ensure that they have clear information and realistic expectations of what the course entails.

Barriers to good practice

The main problems observed centred on different interpretations of client confidentiality between colleges and ES. Additionally, there were problems of lost, or uncompleted, paperwork, and incompatibility between ES and college approaches to assessment. College and ES systems were not always compatible, and often neither partner was willing to adapt their preferred system(s) or working practices. The opportunities for meetings and visits with NDPAs were dependent on, and constrained by, their workloads.

Present good practice

Arrangements that secure clear progression routes through the programme, with standardised assessments, administration, materials and systems are in place in some New Deal partnerships.

Ideally, the movement of paperwork through the system should follow the client, with information about the client, including Gateway initial assessments and action plans, forwarded to the colleges through close liaison with NDPAs. Clients should be fully informed of the process.

> In one case, the college worked with NDPAs to ensure that action plans were robust and complete. Details of client aptitudes were noted in the client progress kit and confirmed by the college's own assessment system. This allowed the college to anticipate the client's commitment, motivation, reliability and aptitude.

When basic, key and job search skills assessed during Gateway are passed on to the college, this enables the college to establish and define optimum levels of learner support.

Providers sought to secure good general communications through frequent meetings between college and NDPAs, and periodic reviews of the process with ES quality managers, to look at formal and informal communication and achievement of planned outcomes.

> Bournemouth and Poole College established strategic and operational partnerships with district ES staff, see case study on page 53.

In some colleges client-focused communication was secured through NDPAs attending initial interviews and induction to ensure a commonality of response. NDPAs also visited clients during courses and acted as mentors.

Improving practice

A standardised national format for the interchange of information between relevant agencies would prevent misunderstandings and duplication of information. Conducting initial college interviews in job centres would also maintain a common accord.

Induction

It is important that clients' induction into FTET provision builds on the assessment and goal setting activities of Gateway.

Present practice

A detailed induction programme is necessary for clients to understand the opportunities and responsibilities that their time at college and on a work placement will entail.

> Some colleges have a two-stage induction, with whole group sessions in the first stage, followed by smaller groups or one-to-one sessions according to need. An induction into the New Deal programme as a whole, followed by generic induction for specific vocational areas, is also an approach used.

During induction the foundations are laid for the client's individual training plans. The results of the basic and key skills assessments are coordinated with the results of a vocational assessment. Intensive tutorial work, supported by mentors and employment coordinators, provides the underpinning support to enable clients to gain access to the job and/or qualification most suited to their capabilities and the job market.

Learner-centred delivery

2

Good practice features

Learners in New Deal full-time education and training face many challenges, including the need to both look for a job as well as achieve a qualification while on the New Deal option. Many may be reluctant or inexperienced learners. Clients' particular needs should be taken into account within their learning programmes. Colleges involved in the project emphasised:

- the importance of individual learning plans (ILPs) based on each client's personal and learning needs
- that the identification, assessment and improvement of basic skills should lay the foundations for future learning and employment.

An individual learning plan, negotiated with each trainee and based on their personal and learning needs, should set specific goals and indicate what the trainee needs to do to achieve them. All staff working with trainees should refer to the individual action plans, and plans should be monitored, reviewed and updated at pre-determined dates.

Individual learning plan

Barriers to good practice

Clients do not always recognise the usefulness of the individual learning plan and it is not always updated frequently. Unrealistic expectations established during the initial Gateway experience can cause problems.

Present good practice

Individual learning plans should provide details of the initial assessment, basic and key skills, target and additional qualifications, job search and job aims. In some colleges, employers are involved in updating and reviewing the plan. Plans are frequently updated by client and tutor and the additional support required and progress against targets discussed. Preparatory work is necessary in Gateway to ensure that clients have realistic expectations.

Lancaster and Morecambe College used a personal development plan and contributed to the production of a curriculum vitae and record of achievement for the client.

CASE STUDY
Individual action planning

At Lancaster and Morecambe College the action plan from ES is the baseline from which we work. All clients take an active part in the design of their training programme and therefore in their individual action plan (IAP). Each client also has a personal development plan (PDP), which is used to monitor job search achievement and personal employability characteristics. The PDP was introduced following research into other adult training programmes.

The IAP and PDP are working documents and contribute to the record of achievement (RoA). From the RoA the client is able to construct a CV at strategic times. The client updates the RoA and CV throughout the duration of the programme.

Critical success factors

Creating the RoA focuses the clients on their skills and abilities across all aspects of life. Social skills, leisure activities and achievements are considered for the RoA.

All the activities on offer in job search, which include soft and social skills, are listed in the PDP, and the client is encouraged to select activities that they feel would improve their employment opportunities. Additionally clients are able to work towards the Foundation Accreditation in Science and Technology (FAST) communication qualification at an appropriate level through job search activities.

Resources

The college is a registered centre for the Open College North West FAST programmes; the New Deal team has been able to tap into FEFC funding for this for the purpose of accreditation and qualification.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

Clients are working towards an additional qualification that is appropriate to their personal level of ability through job search activities. This gives a meaning and purpose to the activities that they undertake.

Clients have seen the need to improve and amend their CV having updated the RoA. The PDP is used to monitor job search progression, highlighting weak areas in skills and employability.

Quality indicators

A number of clients have left the programme early having secured employment. This has to some degree been brought about by clients realising that they have a wide range of untapped skills, which, coupled with minimum training in job search in selected activities, has resulted in a positive outcome.

Improving practice

Induction procedures must be standardised in all areas. Guidance has been provided by the LSC (*Good practice guide on the initial assessment of learning and support needs and planning learning to meet needs*, DfEE 2001) to support providers undertaking initial assessment and documenting the learning plan.

Flexible learning programmes

New Deal clients may enter the full-time education and training option at various points throughout the year. This places a considerable strain on college systems that are not geared up to provide multiple entry points. Colleges need to provide learning at the appropriate level and stage, and often for individual learners, rather than whole groups. Some colleges have risen to this challenge and provide a considerable degree of flexibility in what is on offer. However, the cost and effort involved are often considerable.

Barriers to good practice

Entry to some college courses is restricted to the beginning of the academic year, with limited availability of flexible entry and completion programmes (ie roll-on/roll-off). The in-filling of New Deal clients onto ongoing courses that are structured within the traditional college course year can cause problems in terms of clients having sufficient time and the appropriate coverage of the course to achieve the qualification.

Present good practice

In some provision the learning content relates to the world of work, and delivery includes the practical application of skills. Colleges are innovative and flexible in their response to clients' needs for pastoral, financial and academic support. A consistent level of resources to aid learning is available to support qualification and job search targets.

CASE STUDY
Customised learning

At Lancaster and Morecambe College a young man was referred for training in distributive operation. He was keen to work in warehousing although he had no practical experience of the occupational area. During the interview we discussed a range of opportunities, including work experience through placement with an employer and additional training that would enhance the client's employability.

It was decided that a suitable course of action would be for the client to obtain a forklift truck licence in addition to the Distributive Operations NVQ, while using an external placement to provide practical work experience and a work environment for the purpose of assessment of the NVQ.

Critical success factors

The assessment of the client's employment needs based upon the job goals led to a programme of training that offered practical hands-on experience through the placement. In doing so a company was found that could not only provide practical experience, but would also be able to offer the young person employment subject to satisfactory placement. Discussion with the employer revealed that until the client was trained he would not be allowed to use their forklift truck equipment.

The employer was keen to promote the qualities the company expected from the client while on placement and made clear the possible outcome of a successful period on placement.

Resources

The client trained on the college's forklift truck course on an infill basis once 70% of the units in the Distribution Operations' NVQ had been completed. The training was funded from within the New Deal funding regime.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The forklift truck training was used as an incentive to ensure that the client achieved the NVQ qualification. This increased client retention and ultimately achievement. The forklift truck training will also enhance his employability, open other avenues of employment and provide skills needed in the local labour market.

From the client's point of view, the forklift truck qualification could make the difference between securing employment or remaining unemployed.

Quality indicators

The employer is exceptionally happy with the client on placement, and has indicated that an employment offer will be made to him on completion of the forklift truck training.

Improving practice

Industrial knowledge is crucial to identify additional training needs to meet local industry and employer needs. It is important to make a careful selection of placements looking for companies who are either starting a recruiting programme or are expanding business or production. However, there is often a discrepancy between the clients' ambition and their ability, not to mention the availability of suitable employment. A sound tutorial system is vital for such clients, with weekly one-to-one or group support.

New Deal is geared to achieving job or qualification outcomes and involves the client in moving into Gateway, into college and then into employment during the programme. This can be very challenging and even frightening for the clients without strong and consistent support from staff.

The Staffordshire Consortium has obtained funding from European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 to provide mentors for New Deal clients. The mentors work closely with employers, accompany clients to placements and do follow-up work for up to 13 weeks after clients have left the programme. This has resulted in a marked rise in the employment outcomes of 28% in eight months.

CASE STUDY
Client guidance and support

A client who was studying animal care at Rodbaston College of Agriculture finished her course in February 2001. She was a good student who worked well at her placement and also on her college course and was well liked by her peers and her tutors. Just before leaving college she asked how she could fulfil her long-term job goal of becoming an RSPCA inspector. I telephoned the RSPCA's head office and enquired about applying for such a position. The recruitment officer told us that a prospective inspector should apply in writing but should not send a CV. The client and I devised a letter of application, noting all her experience. I sat with the client while she typed the letter; then I posted it for her.

After completing college the client contacted me for help in completing her application form for the RSPCA and I met her in Wolverhampton Library to do so. The application form was in two parts: the first part was a series of questions designed to assess clients' suitability for the RSPCA; the second was a general application form. The answers to questions on the first section gained points. In order to be considered by the RSPCA a candidate had to gain more than 40 points and more than 50 points guaranteed an interview.

The client scored 43 points but had problems answering one question, about whether she could put down a healthy animal if the circumstances warranted it. The client was unsure that she could answer 'yes', the answer that the RSPCA required, as she did not think that any animal should be destroyed if it was healthy. I gave her some instances where circumstances might warrant such action, for instance if an animal had behavioural problems, and suggested that the client thought about this for a few days. I also pointed out to her that trainee inspectors were required to visit abattoirs and cull animals as part of their training. If she did not think that she could do this there was no point in completing the application as she would be unable to comply with some of the conditions of the job.

When we met the following week the client was very upset, as she had decided that she could not answer 'yes' to the question and therefore her long-term job goal was now impossible. We discussed her options in detail and I was able to point out to her that she was only 21 years old and her opinions could change with experience, and she might still achieve her long-term ambition. We discussed other careers such as working at veterinary surgeries, at kennels, for other animal charities or for dog grooming parlours. The client soon realised that she could still have a career with animals and cheered up considerably.

We devised a speculative letter to local surgeries and dog grooming parlours in the hope that at least one would ask her for an interview. At the time of writing we have not had a response from any vets but the client has had an interview at a dog grooming parlour and is now working for one day a week training as a grooming assistant. She has put her ambitions to work for the RSPCA on hold for the time being but is much more optimistic about her future.

Improving practice

Assessing vocational aptitudes is important and there need to be close links between the vocational tutors and the New Deal tutor. While some vocational tutors administer their own vocational aptitude tests, these need to be linked with the centrally coordinated basic and key skills testing. One college has used MAAP, an assessment of motivation, ambition, aptitude and perseverance. The individual training plan, updated, will also inform this support.

CASE STUDY

Using MAAP to assess client commitment

Worcester College of Technology has adopted MAAP, a computer-based assessment system to identify particular attributes of client behaviour. Through a sequence of questions the programme explores an individual's motivation, attitude, commitment and perseverance. The results of the assessment lead to further discussion with the client to establish a subsequent plan to address any weaknesses or shortcomings. The key is collaboration and joint ownership of actions.

Critical success factors

The key elements for success were:

- the evaluation of motivation and aptitude, which has enabled the college to provide a more rounded response to client needs
- the opportunity to explore the underlying reasons that cause particular results, which has led to a more tightly defined response.

The assessment process is revisable in that clients can undertake subsequent assessments and comparisons can be made about their individual progress. This approach retains client focus and acts as an indirect motivator.

Resources

The college supported this initiative from its own resources. Costs included the programme and the training for staff to be able to administer and interpret the assessment. To ensure all clients are assessed, the college has purchased the training for 16 staff to enable them to perform the assessment.

All initial interviews with New Deal clients include the MAAP assessment as an integral aspect of the discussion. All staff, regardless of specialism, are able to conduct the assessment providing an optimum service to the clients.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The college has monitored retention rates among clients and undertaken comparative studies with earlier periods. These indicate that overall participation lengths have improved from 19 weeks to 26 weeks in the first year.

The college has also monitored achievement rates across qualifications and job entry. Vocational qualification rates have improved by 22% and job entry rates have risen from 24% to 65%.

Quality indicators

Regional statistics show the FTET to be sending approximately 65% of leavers into work. Retention rates have improved by 37%, achievement rates have improved by 22%.

A range of vocational options across an extensive consortium offers a wide range of opportunities for the clients. Colleges that are able to work with partners, or that already provide many vocational areas, offer the most flexible options. The roll-on/roll-off issue is a problem for some colleges or for departments within the college that claim that the requirements of awarding bodies necessitate a need for agreed start and finish dates.

Two colleges have addressed this issue by unitising the curriculum. In the Staffordshire Consortium they secured ESF funding to develop Open College Network (OCN) units, and have developed 54 units at Entry level and Level 1 together with study and tutor packs and a full set of assessment sheets. Several of the units are involved in job search, and preparation for employment in the vocational areas has also been prioritised.

Four colleges in the consortium are converting materials to electronic HTML files and are developing interactive use of the materials in a managed learning environment. The fact that so many staff were involved in developing these materials has the side effect of creating additional interest in the New Deal programme in the college, as well as giving clients the opportunity to access individual learning materials at their own pace.

CASE STUDY

New vocational horizons

An Open College Network for the North West and Midlands (OCNNWM) programme called New Vocational Horizons was developed with ESF funding and approved in June 1999 for the Consortium of Staffordshire Colleges. The programme contains four job search units and 21 vocational units. Units in the programme are mostly available at Entry level and Level 1.

All New Vocational Horizons units comprise one credit value, indicating approximately 30 hours of study time. For more information about New Vocational Horizons please contact Marion Hallsworth, Senior Development Officer at OCNNWM, e-mail m.hallsworth@staffs.ac.uk

Study packs and tutor packs were developed by vocational specialists from the Consortium of Staffordshire Colleges. Study packs contain the underpinning knowledge and a range of activities for the student while the tutor pack has the unit information and a range of assessments in order to complete the unit. The packs are for exclusive use by Consortium staff.

Job search units

Unit title	Level
Career planning	Entry and 1
Opportunity awareness	Entry and 1
Job application skills	Entry and 1
Interview skills	Entry and 1

Vocational units

The introductory unit 'Preparation for Employment' is a generic unit suitable for use in any vocational area. The study packs to support the learning are vocationally relevant. The additional vocational units enable students to achieve certification in a range of specialist topics. Some of the learning materials are being further developed for use in LearnWise, a Virtual Learning Environment.

For further information please contact Sue Kuzubasoglu, e-mail skuzl1sc@stokecoll.ac.uk

A full list of units in the New Vocational Horizons programme is available on request.

Newcastle College is unitising the whole college curriculum with 75% of programmes to be completed by September 2001. In working with partner colleges, Newcastle was able to show that even in programme areas where partner colleges claimed that a common start date was essential, and that roll-on/roll-off would not be possible, this approach had won the support of vocational staff.

The staff are working to develop a demand-led curriculum at Entry level and Levels 1 and 2, with more opportunities to access learning. The way this is being implemented is being managed in different ways in the different schools or departments.

CASE STUDY
Meeting client needs

Gaining access to FTET programmes at all times during the academic year rather than the specific college enrolment times is a particular problem for New Deal FTET providers.

Colchester Institute decided to introduce a specific IT course for those on the New Deal Gateway. Introducing this course provided learners both with ease of access onto courses and an opportunity for further training and learning. It was decided to organise all sessions on a rolling modular basis to provide as much flexibility for all students as was possible.

The curriculum was fine-tuned to ensure that it met local skills shortages; this required liaising with local employers, the Employment Service and in particular the local New Deal Steering Group.

Work experience was built into the programme to ensure that learners not only gained the theory and the qualifications – they had in-college work experience and external work experience with local employers as well.

As the aim of the New Deal FTET is for clients to progress to employment, a full job search programme was included within the course curriculum. Identified times, activities and reviews ensured that the students were focused and clear in their goals for employment.

As a skills shortage in the call centre field had been identified, learners could, if appropriate, gain a recognised call centre certificate in their last four weeks. This qualification was gained after learning in a simulated call centre set up by Colchester Institute to meet the local shortage in qualified, call-centre staff.

Critical success factors

The trainees' experience on FTET was greatly improved by the introduction of this course. It allowed the trainees to join and feel part of the college immediately after their induction period. The modular format gave them identifiable and achievable progression, with the ability to go over any area that caused problems. In-built weekly review sessions ensured that any issues raised could be resolved quickly.

The flexible system also provided the trainees with additional support. Since the implementation of this initiative, the starts have increased and retention and client feedback on the programme have improved.

Resources

Instead of following the normal linear system of IT delivery this course changed to modular delivery, allowing for very flexible entry, format and content. The course can include various locally relevant additions if required, for instance, 'How has the internet affected local companies?', to enhance the trainees' understanding and prepare them with a knowledge of local companies for future job approaches.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

It has been noticeable that trainees' achievements following the introduction of this course have improved. Results for exams show marked improvements, with almost all trainees gaining passes. Attendance has been much better, with very few trainees taking unauthorised absence. The modular approach allows the trainees to work at their own pace.

CASE STUDY

Customised learning through a unitised curriculum

Newcastle College is unitising a large percentage of all its programmes by September 2001. These will provide several entry points per year to a wide range of provision.

Many other vocational areas of the college have unitised their curriculum, for instance, the NVQs in administration, bakery, catering, food preparation, hairdressing, and IT; construction awards in brickwork, painting and decorating, plumbing, and wood occupations; the NCFE courses in art and design, and music technology. These programmes accommodate fortnightly starts throughout the year.

Critical success factors

After a year of operating the FTET contract, the college was still not embracing the concepts that made the New Deal provision different from the rest of the provision. It still adhered to the 'standard college academic year' and all that this entailed. It was necessary to raise the profile of FTET from top down and bottom up; therefore the following steps were taken.

1. A paper was presented at SMT discussing the issues that needed to be tackled.
2. A working group was set up to review the college's provision. The composition was four school reps who were identified as having good practice, the head of curriculum development, the contract manager and the contract coordinator. The terms of reference were identifying and sharing good practice, looking at what did not work and finding solutions.
3. The final review paper was presented at SMT and executive and senior managers agreed to support the following recommendations:
   - each school to have a lead person responsible for New Deal activity
   - develop new, and re-engineer current programmes to fit New Deal criteria within each curriculum area
   - develop qualifications in line with job vacancies in the north east, using local market information
   - set up a best practice network.
4. The paper was also tabled at the Teaching and Learning Committee as well as the monthly meeting for New Deal, so that staff at operational levels were fully briefed as to the way forward and their role or responsibility in the improved client experience. It was essential to secure the support of a 'New Deal champion' in the executive, as well as each school and service across the college who would use their influence and expertise to bring about change in line with the needs of the clients and the contract.

Resources

The meetings, research and presentations were all resourced through individuals giving their time to help improve provision for the clients. Work on unitisation of the curriculum now has a major focus across the college and is led by the manager of curriculum.

CASE STUDY continued

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

More flexible programmes are being developed to ensure the clients have a wider choice of vocational pathway. Some programmes have been specifically developed for the New Deal client, for instance NCFE Music Technology and Art and Design, and others have been redesigned to fit the requirements of roll-on/roll-off, mixing and matching modules and elements to the specific needs of the individual. This has improved achievement levels and helped retention once clients have settled into their chosen vocational pathway.

Indicators of improved quality

The college provides 85% of FTET provision in the unit of delivery. The Newcastle unit of delivery was inspected by the TSC in March 2001 and at the feedback session it was reported that one of its strengths was the wide range of flexible provision, including:

- access to a wide range of provision, which is roll-on/roll-off
- enriched curriculum
- good mix of curriculum activities
- range of additionality offered.

Improving practice

Best practice assumes that a range of college resources is available to New Deal clients. These include libraries, open access to internet facilities, job search club and learning resources centres. ESF funding has been used both for curriculum development and to add value to the offer by the provision of additional staff mentors. Some colleges have been even more imaginative by including driving lessons and purchasing bicycles (from ESF funding) to enable clients to travel to work while on New Deal.

Cornwall College has a network of learning shops on the high streets. These are drop-in centres (open on weekdays from 9am to 9pm and on Saturday mornings) that provide training facilities linked into provision such as Computer Literacy and Information Technology (CLAIT), which can be accessed by individual learning accounts. The learning shops are run by a college or consortium of colleges, and clients can spend their time in the learning shop or college according to need.

Assessment and delivery of basic and key skills

3

Good practice features

Examples of good practice features include:

- assessing clients' basic and key skills before entry to inform their individual learning programme, and to ensure early intervention and support appropriate to individual need
- an assessment of student preferences and abilities and linking these with labour market or qualification opportunities
- ongoing assessment of basic and key skills throughout the programme, with progress discussed with trainees
- ensuring that all assessors have the relevant skills and training for their role
- basic skills delivery based on national standards with national tests and qualifications available.

Barriers to good practice

Initial assessment results are not always available to tutors or used to inform action plans. Initial assessment of clients' basic and key skills is not routinely undertaken and the type of tests used varies considerably. A common method of assessing key and basic skills is required with individual learning support programmes developed as a result.

Where job outcomes are the client's primary focus, qualifications can be seen as a secondary aim and can lead to reduction in breadth and level of training opportunities. Clients' ambitions and expectations may outweigh their capabilities and they may be reluctant to accept the need for additional support.

Improving practice

Standardisation of practice and the outcomes of the process should be made available to all staff concerned, including placement providers and the NDPA, as appropriate.

An initial basic skills screening should be administered during Gateway to determine their learning needs and the most suitable training option for the client. Details of this screening must be passed to the FTET providers.

Present good practice

In one college clients had an interview with CareerLink prior to moving to the college to ensure the learning programme had a specific vocational focus.

At the college, at the start of FTET course, there is a common assessment programme that includes the following features:

- Basic Skills Agency (BSA) testing is carried out in the first week by trained staff in a central unit. Some colleges also include psychometric testing.
- Results of the screening are circulated to all relevant staff involved with the client, including the employer, NDPA and placement provider.
- Key skills are assessed in a central unit by trained staff. This brings New Deal clients in line with other students in the college. In some colleges it is provided in individual programme areas, but in all cases staff must be trained assessors.
- Additional support is available to clients, based on the results of the basic or key skills assessment, or both, in a centralised learning resources base and in the vocational workshop or classroom where possible.
- Clients have access to qualifications such as Wordpower, Numberpower, Foundation Awards in Vocational Education, Maths and English, etc.
- Clients' progress is frequently monitored throughout the course.

One college performs initial testing for clients in Gateway as part of a bespoke contract. An initial screening test is given, which triggers the full BSA test if significant difficulties are found.

CASE STUDY
Key skills

Newcastle College uses a software package called Key Skill Builder as an assessment tool for all students. The college's computer suites are all networked so that this software can be accessed at any time and is therefore available for clients on roll-on/roll-off programmes.

Critical success factors

After an induction week in the Employment Development workshop, clients progress to their New Deal programme. At this point their key skills are assessed using the software package. The resulting assessment is used by the tutor to ensure they place clients on the appropriate level of programme with support for their basic and key skills needs. The assessment result is kept in each client's personal files to enable tutors to accommodate their individual needs. The test outcomes also inform the development of the individual training plan and discussions during personal reviews.

Resources

The Key Skills assessment package is used for all college students and funding was allocated from college budgets.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The use of the assessment tool has enabled tutors to understand the individual needs of the clients and tailor the programme to suit those needs. The clients have thus been well supported and given appropriate direction on their programme, which has helped retention and achievement. This process ensures that tutors have a standardised process through which they can analyse a client's level of ability on entry, thus enabling the college to negotiate with ES the most appropriate training plan.

Example: A client who had previously suffered a stroke was referred to FTET. Because of accurate assessment of the client's key and basic skills needs a training plan was developed to achieve the appropriate elements of a Level 1 NVQ qualification.

Using the assessment software has ensured clients were assessed quickly, allowing the results to be used to develop an individual training plan from early in each client's training programme. The computer-based software has also proved to be a much better way of getting clients to be comfortable with the idea of doing this type of assessment and the immediate results for client and tutor ensure remedial action can be put in place early. This has been a very positive step for the clients involved.

Indicators of improved quality

Clients appear to be happier because the training programme is tailor-made to their ability. Their chances of achieving the qualification most appropriate to them is also improved.

The TSC inspectors reported a strength of the provision as being the delivery of a wide range of flexible provision, enriched curriculum and good range of additionality. This can only be achieved with accurate assessment of entry behaviour and programmes designed to fit individual needs.

CASE STUDY
Assessment of key and basic skills

A young woman was referred to Lancaster and Morecambe College for training in basic skills. During the interview it was established that the client wanted to enter a retail career. Following the BSA assessment the results indicated that the client was above Entry level in three out of the four components. Numeracy was the main issue that the client wished to address (to obtain Level 1).

To enhance the client's learning opportunities we agreed that we would not only use the C&G Numberpower and Wordpower qualifications, but incorporate FAME for English and FAST Computing. The FAST IT qualification was included in the package to enhance the delivery of basic skills and offer the client an alternative recording method while learning new skills. FAME was used to provide a stepping stone towards a communications qualification. In addition we would try to find a work placement in order to commence training towards the Retail NVQ qualification at Level 1.

Critical success factors
The client was offered a diverse range of learning opportunities to improve basic skills, which provide naturally occurring, achievable goals.

The use of a more diverse programme brightens what can sometimes be perceived as dull stand-alone subjects. The additional training opportunities support the basic skills progression, allowing the client accreditation of prior learning in some instances.

Looking at what the client hopes to achieve after the basic skills training allowed us to offer her a taster through the provision of a work placement with an employer and additionally gave her an insight into NVQ training. This experience can then be built upon should the client wish to progress further in the retail field.

Resources
The programme is resourced from New Deal funding, with some use of college-wide services.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal
The client has a varied programme and is able to understand the relationships and relevance between all aspects of the training provision. The client has short-term SMART goals with the flexibility of accreditation of prior learning. Additionally some work from the retail placement can be used within the basic skills environment.

Indicators of improved quality
It is expected that the client will progress to FTET and Retail NVQ training in due course. Retention of the client is sustained through a varied and interesting programme.

Improving practice

The practitioners' knowledge and understanding of basic skills needs is essential to identify additional training needs that will support and stimulate learning.

Careful selection of placements is necessary, looking for companies who are able to support clients with learning needs and who are either starting a recruiting programme or are expanding business or production.

Practice could be improved by:

- the establishment of a central independent assessment agency
- FE and HE courses being counted by New Deal as positive outcomes
- developing online learning
- providing job search modules on the intranet.

One college proposed to second a NDPA to the college to liaise closely with staff during the first four weeks of induction. This would restrict information gaps or blockages between the college and ES.

Monitoring and tracking

4

Good practice features

Effective arrangements should be in place across the unit of delivery to track clients through the FTET option. This information needs to be accurate, up to date, and readily accessible to those with a legitimate interest in learners' progress. It can act as a means of identifying and rectifying any problems that learners encounter, and so reduce drop-out.

Trainee monitoring review and follow up

Barriers to good practice

Clients move house and don't answer letters, making it difficult to maintain contact with them while on the programme and on completion of the option. Relatively low levels of contact with clients post option are common and this affects the tracking of learners' jobs outcomes and also the measure of their sustainability.

Other problems can include:

- delays in circulating information may not reveal the true position regarding clients' progress to the central college administration, the staff in the vocational area and other responsible staff
- ineffective monitoring across consortia members
- timesheet forgeries or incorrect completion of forms
- paper-intensive and bureaucratic systems that are not efficient or effective for the client and provider
- confusion in roles and responsibilities of coordinator, tutor and administrative staff.

Present good practice

Managing clients' transition from Gateway into the identified option is crucial. To ensure the experience does not detract from the required outcome of the activity, partners need to maintain effective communication between all agencies and organisations and across the college and within the provider's organisation.

In Worcester College, as part of the 10 college New Deal consortium, a new post has been set up, paid for by the College and based in the job centre, to track New Deal non-attendees. The post-holder will be responsible for visiting clients at home and will also track job placements.

Some providers have a centralised unit and dedicated support team for collation and distribution of New Deal management information. An effective and well-managed database is necessary to record, monitor and evaluate learner or client data, which includes information on:

- client information forwarded from the NDPA to the provider to inform initial assessment plan (IAP)
- initial interview with clients – notes, comments, etc
- initial assessment outcomes – accredited prior achievement/learning
- induction
- ILPs and development plans
- reviews – action planning, qualification and work placement, tutor reviews; reviews of progress cover welfare issues and are sent to NDPA highlighting ES areas
- assessments – achievement of units towards NVQ or other training as stated on the ILP
- employability or job search training and activity
- placements undertaken
- interviews with employers
- achievement – qualifications, units, etc.

The daily attendance of all clients is tracked, using the corporate information system of class attendance and through regular contact with placement providers; a robust MIS system using Pro-access software gives statistics on retention and achievement.

There is commitment from all partners to ensure regular accurate submission, with all partners understanding the importance and relevance of accurate statistical information. Constant monitoring and feedback from client and tutor are central.

CASE STUDY
Buddy system

To offer the appropriate training provision for FTET for New Deal, Blackpool and the Fylde College carefully considered the local labour market information, taking into account employment and unemployment on the Fylde coast and the projected New Deal client characteristics. Half of New Deal clients have no GCSE qualifications, 44% have had five or more previous jobs and 75% had left education on or before their 16th birthday. Once this exercise had been undertaken, appropriate vocational training provision in a wide range of occupational areas was offered to meet client needs and the local job market.

As New Deal is a 'back to work programme' it was designed in college to promote this objective. All clients must attend a careers guidance interview with the local CareerLink office to explore chosen occupational areas. Once a decision has been made clients are referred to the college by their NDPAs for an interview in the vocational area of their choice. Clients are shown round the department and the programme is discussed fully, followed by a three-day taster. Once on course, clients have a full induction and are introduced to their 'buddy', who will be their support and mentor throughout their time at college.

All learning opportunities are a mixture of classroom-based and realistic working environments where clients are working towards NVQ standards. The basic employability skills of timekeeping, attendance, appropriate behaviour and attitude for the workplace are therefore developed in a vocational and work context.

The buddy system

Through our Employment Service Innovation Fund project, funded through LSDA, we have recently launched the 'buddy' system for all clients. Clients are matched with a 'buddy' in college who is a member of the Educational Support Team and they are supported on programme by this buddy from induction onwards.

The buddy system includes meeting clients for a coffee once a week to discuss progress and problems. There is also the offer of an 'on duty' buddy from the team to give immediate support on demand should a client crisis occur. Buddies liaise closely with the New Deal administration officer to monitor and support non-attendance.

Throughout the buddying process, clients are reviewed monthly with particular focus on the progress of their basic employability skills, in addition to the tutor's monthly review of vocational progress. Clients usually start CV preparation within the first 3–6 months of training. Once clients reach the point of being ready for an external placement, usually within the first 6–9 months of training, this activity is organised, together with interview technique development.

Towards the end of their training, intensive one-to-one job search commences and clients are supported into work. During the move from college to work, clients' buddies are on hand to visit them and support them in their new workplace for the first 13 weeks.

CASE STUDY continued

Resources

The college was able to access funding from three different sources to implement the buddy system. It joined with four other colleges to access the Employment Service Innovation Fund via LSDA. This funding played the major part in enabling the project to commence. The college had already gained ESF funding to support New Deal and this has continued to support trainee expenses and other extra curricular activities. Finally, the college won the first Association of Colleges Eversheds Beacon Award for New Deal in 1999/2000 and this prize money has also contributed to the buddy system.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

As a result of the implementation of the buddy system:

- support for retention on programme has increased by 11%
- qualifications gained have increased by 1%, and should increase further as retention continues to increase
- job outcomes have increased by 16%.

Tracking leavers in conjunction with the district ES allows focus on all clients for whom their benefit situation has changed. The college contacts all such persons and records current circumstances. A financial reward is made to clients who gained work within the measurement period. In conjunction with district ES, a referral framework is identified that allows provider to match clients with provision – tasters, etc.

Indicators of improved quality

The college feels the buddy system is working well and definitely fulfilling the need identified, particularly with the strong increases in retention and job outcomes. The vocational focus of the programme, together with the emphasis on basic employability skills and the buddying activities, have all contributed to its success. However, without the dedication of the specific vocational tutors and buddies who believe in what they are doing, the programme would not be as strong. Recent Employment Service league tables show the provision to be the top ranking for getting clients into jobs in the northwest region.

The college was recently visited by Del Fletcher from Sheffield Hallam University who was researching the buddy system as part of a group of projects being researched for the Employment Service Innovation Fund. We are still waiting for his report. The college is also hoping to secure ESF funding to keep the project running after June 2001.

Improving practice

Measures to improve practice further could include:

- colleges confirming contact details prior to the client leaving to ensure MIS data is as accurate as possible; monthly follow-up of leavers with NDPAs
- use of post-employment success stories in local media
- ES assistance to find other solutions for individuals unsuccessful in finding work – more support required – better use of follow-through
- continued use of the job search facilities up to 13 weeks from completion of training.

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CASE STUDY
Monitoring and tracking

Uxbridge College runs an intensive four-week induction for all New Deal students to identify barriers to employment and address any issues that may prevent retention and achievement. This runs concurrently with the students' programme of study. It is also a good time to build a relationship between the New Deal team and the student.

Issues surrounding the 30-hour rule can be clarified and all the implications of New Deal discussed. Timesheets and procedures regarding absences and appointments are explained.

Critical success factors

This process makes the student feel more integrated into the college. The client becomes absolutely clear what is expected and is able to share any worries or problems. New Deal students become comfortable and more likely to commit to the programme.

Resources

Staff time was made available to manage and organise the initiative.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The induction leads to a supportive programme of study for the majority of students. This makes the tracking through the programme easier and aids the 13-week, post-course period of tracking. A sound induction identifies many issues and completion of induction usually leads to a good retention rate.

Improving practice

Measures could include:

- weekly face-to-face contact with the tutor and where necessary contact with the client in the learning environment to discuss progress
- using a swipe-card system linked with MIS for tracking in all areas to ensure speediest and most accurate tracking
- New Deal personal trainer (NDPT) to have direct access to course tutorial notes; also the ES can have access through the New Deal 13 and case conferencing.

Managing early leavers

Good practice features

Colleges should be aware of warning signs that indicate that clients are unhappy and may be considering leaving the programme. These signs may include erratic attendance, poor timekeeping and lack of engagement during group or one-to-one sessions. Systems to record such behaviour should be in place and extra support offered. Clients may still leave the programme, but the college may be able to ensure that clients have a record of their achievements while on the course and perhaps move onto another New Deal option. Clients who leave early with dignity may be more likely to return at some point in the future.

Barriers to good practice

Barriers to good practice can include:

- A lack of commitment to the vocational area as a result of incorrect referral: New Deal is a compulsory programme for some clients, who may lack motivation.
- Clients who are wrongly referred to a college course rather than a job programme.
- Client reluctance to admit they need support.
- Cost constraints that reduce the level of additional support available.
- Insufficient information about the client provided by the Employment Service prior to start.
- Short timescales for starts (end of Gateway) can mean a 'hurried' approach by all parties to the referral process and ultimately prove detrimental to the client.
- New Deal personal advisers may not always able to attend and support reviews due to pressure of work.

Present good practice

The project identified a great deal of good practice within the colleges.This included:

- one-to-one induction where appropriate, highlighting the extensive range of facilities available within the college to assist with learning
- one-to-one tutor support available where required to ensure additional support and access to advice on appropriate referral
- emphasis during induction on the availability of support
- involving clients in discussion about alternatives to leaving the scheme and adjustment to the training plan
- regular progress reviews and exchange of information on progress between the vocational and New Deal tutors to reduce the likelihood of clients' leaving the programme
- arrangements, through the NDPA, to support clients unable to continue in training during the follow-through period to secure a qualification outcome
- off-site opportunities to discuss problems at local information shops in convenient locations
- frequent monitoring visits by appropriate staff with the emphasis on welfare issues
- sharing all relevant information with partners

- frequent meetings with relevant staff to promote awareness of the differing schemes and requirements and to ensure good networking
- the provision of accurate information early in the referral process to assist in the development of a suitable training plan and support
- diagnostic assessment of motivation, aptitude and attitude (through the MAAP system), coupled with frequent interaction with the client to ensure early identification of problems.

Improving practice

Measures that colleges could consider to improve practice include:

- continued interaction with NDPAs to ensure the appropriate message is given to clients
- use of evening classes and alternative classes to ensure achievement
- flowchart of all progression opportunities.

Links with employers and work preparation

5

Good practice features

Extensive and high-quality links with employers provide colleges with an external focus for their vocational provision and a source of work experience which can improve client employability. Links with a range of employers help to build student commitment to the option, avoid misplaced expectations, and ensure that students are fully aware of expectations that they will move into employment as a result of their New Deal programme.

Work preparation should be an integral part of the New Deal FTET programme. Activities should be varied, and wherever possible relate to real work opportunities.

Barriers to good practice

Problems encountered often involved coping with employer attitudes and perceptions. Employers were not always willing to participate in, and to invest time and money in, the New Deal, and it was suggested that they sometimes feel that the social agenda belongs outside their domain. In addition, employers often associated with other programmes in the college may not be fully used for New Deal purposes.

Present good practice

New Deal FTET courses should draw easily on the existing links between the college and employers, rather than having to establish links entirely from their own resources. In one case, the college Enterprise and Business Development Unit provided opportunities for the New Deal team to establish liaisons with a wide range of employers.

New Deal FTET can also benefit from links created by other programmes. For example, liaison officers have close links with many local employers through work with Modern Apprenticeships. Links with employers are improved through visits by college staff to employers' premises to market the college offer, involving employers in meetings and forums, sponsorship from national and local organisations, and joint ventures.

Employer visits to colleges were widely used to provide introductory sessions for clients, assist with job search and vocational awareness, make presentations to clients and conduct mock interviews.

Training is linked to local employers' specific needs and requirements. Placements are sought in companies known to be either expanding or about to recruit. In this way the clients are placed in a position to demonstrate their skills, thus reducing the need in some cases to recruit formally.

Two case studies of good practice were identified, with the first trying to secure better liaison with employers generally, and the second to improve the opportunities for placement of students with them.

CASE STUDY
Workplace mentors

As part of our New Deal work experience arrangements, which can include virtually whole FTET programmes completed within the workplace, West Cheshire College provides workplace mentors for our clients. This system is also being continued into the early stages of full-time paid employment.

We have a client who is in placement at a nationally recognised garage group in Ellesmere Port and who began his FTET programme in June 2000. He already had considerable experience in tyre and exhaust fitting and we marketed his skills to the garage on this basis. The client's main programme did not start until September 2000 so he was placed at the garage on a full-time work-placement until he could come into college to begin a repair and servicing of road vehicles course.

The client has remained with the garage and has been mentored by one of the experienced mechanics, while learning workplace practice and employability skills. The garage and the college have kept in close contact with each other and some early employability obstacles of poor timekeeping and inflexibility have been overcome. The mentor has supported and advised our client and given practical help where necessary, for instance by occasionally providing lifts for him when his own transport arrangements fell through.

Critical success factors

Credibility factor – the client recognises and respects the mentor's vocationally specific experience and skill.

In the example above the mentor had completed his training at the college some years previously, and had initially worked for a very small wage for a year before being taken on full-time. He recognised the benefit to himself of this and so encouraged the client to develop a long-term attitude to his work placement – reaping rewards in the future.

It was possible to give support for personal difficulties – the mentor was prepared for potential difficulties to arise because he was fully informed of the client's unsettled domestic circumstances. Full and effective communication between the college, the client and the mentor played a crucial part in developing a supportive framework for the client.

CASE STUDY continued

Resources

Initially, this was funded through New Deal Innovation Fund monies as part of an employability project we undertook with our consortium colleagues in other Cheshire colleges, and continued and developed through LSDA New Deal Innovation Fund project monies. The New Deal workplace adviser maintains regular contact with employers and identifies workplace mentors in negotiations with work experience providers and, ultimately, employers.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The client retained his placement and remained on New Deal despite a series of domestic upheavals, financial crises and other issues, which could have adversely affected his commitment to his future job goal.

We intend to spread this good practice to placements with other employers, and hope to arrange completion of the qualification in this vocational area wholly within the workplace, via workplace assessment, in the future.

Indicators of improved quality

The client has been offered a full-time job in the garage from September 2001 and substantial part-time hours over summer 2001.

Improving practice

Proposals to improve good practice included:

- making use of existing database of employers for the purpose of placement and introducing other training opportunities, standardising around one database for use with all college courses
- offering employers college visits or tours, and inviting more input from employers in course content and design
- attracting employers through standardised questionnaires that coordinators can complete with them as part of normal reviews.
- progression from the FTET option into sustained employment can be encouraged through sound work preparation.

Supporting appropriate student choice of occupation or vocational development

Good practice features

The project identified good practice in this area, which focused on improving student choice of course, assessing and improving job search skills, providing better support in attaining job outcomes, and providing early exposure to working environments.

Barriers to good practice

Problems encountered were largely organisational, such as being reliant on staff who are not directly line managed by the New Deal coordinators, and having time to build rapport with clients. Colleges also reported some initial minor difficulties with work placements.

Present good practice

Present good practice is characterised by the quality of vocational advice, and the ability of the college to act on it. One college offers a vocational guidance and advice process as part of Gateway to all clients. It involves in-depth consultation with client and tutor, induction, and one-to-one discussion to ensure client expectation will be satisfied if possible. There are frequent reviews, and close tutor links. This assists in developing the clients' understanding of the labour market.

Assessing vocational aptitudes is important and there needs to be close liaison between the vocational tutors and the New Deal tutor. Some vocational tutors administer their own vocational aptitude tests, and these should be linked with the centrally coordinated basic and key skills testing. The individual training plan, updated frequently, will also inform this support.

One college has used an assessment of motivation, ambition, aptitude and perseverance (MAAP).

CASE STUDY
Work preparation

At Uxbridge College workshop sessions are held for all New Deal students, which include:

- CV preparation
- job search techniques
- interview techniques
- body language
- motivation skills
- team building.

The workshops are run interactively, making students aware of their needs and aspirations in relation to finding employment, while at the same time allowing them to reflect on their previous experiences.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The workshops provide the students with the necessary skills (as well as qualifications) to have the confidence to seek employment. A well-planned and welcoming induction into the programme, explaining what is expected of clients and what they can expect from us, was important.

Indicators of improved quality

Two out of three of the students who completed their programme of study found sustainable employment.

CASE STUDIES
Work preparation – individual support

At Bournemouth and Poole College a mountain bike and decorating toolkit and books were bought for one of the clients, who was undertaking a course in the vocational area of painting and decorating.

Critical success factors
The client could not drive and lived in an area where public transport was limited.

The purchase of a bicycle enabled him to join a decorating work placement, which mainly dealt with domestic premises. He was able to get to various sites in the Bournemouth and surrounding area on time; he also had all the basic tools to carry out the job.

Resources
The initiative was resourced through ESF funding.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal
We continued to manage the trainee through his Apprenticeship, and feedback from the company told us that the trainee was punctual in attending various sites.

Indicators of improved quality
This particular trainee was taken on as an employee of the company and continued his training through a Modern Apprenticeship.

Another client, who was interested in the security guard industry, was given a full course of driving lessons so that her employment options were more flexible. She was also given additional clothing to meet vocational requirements.

Critical success factors
The security industry operates mainly on shift systems and start and finish times of shift often fall outside public transport hours. By taking a full course of driving lessons and test, the client was able to take a job as a security officer with Rentokil at the Bournemouth Crown Courts. In addition she was issued with pilot shirts, black flannel trousers, clip-on ties, safety shoes and clip-on torches. This enhancement to her programme also boosted her confidence about finding a job in this field.

Resources
The initiative was resourced through ESF funding.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal
More trainees are now able to gain employment in the security industry and have broadened their employment opportunities. It has allowed them to become more confident and independent. These former trainees are now supervisors and are recruiting staff from our current courses.

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CASE STUDIES continued

Indicators of improved quality

Quality has improved through:

- follow-up job outcome questionnaires
- 'thank you' letters from trainees
- continued recruitment from the security industry.

Another client was issued with a full bricklayer's toolkit and his travel and overnight expenses to attend a specialist fibre-glassing course were reimbursed.

Critical success factors

The issue of a bricklayer's toolkit enabled the trainee to carry out a work placement with a company that specialises in landscape gardening and ornamental works.

The company paid for the trainee to attend a course in fibre-glassing large garden ponds. The college reimbursed his expenses on completion of his NVQ Level 2 and he was subsequently employed by this company.

How was this initiative resourced?

The initiative was resourced through ESF funding.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The practice of issuing personal toolkits has enabled construction trainees to take up immediate employment by having their own tools to start on site.

Indicators of improved quality

Feedback from a job outcome questionnaire indicated improved quality.

Improving practice

Proposals for improvement included the use of realistic work environments within the college where there is a need for a sheltered work environment until confidence is improved.

Job search

Good practice features

It is important to prepare students for the demands of seeking employment, in terms of practical skills and attitudes and expectations, and to help them to implement job search effectively.

Barriers to good practice

Problems have tended to derive from confused client motivation and inappropriate expectations. There has been some resistance from clients who perceive they are at college to undertake a course rather than to prepare for employment; some refusal of support where there is an identified need; and reluctance to get involved with job search until nearer the end of the course.

Present good practice

Good practice is characterised by a systematic approach whereby every client goes through a job search programme, all clients undergo BSA assessment (to identify learning support needs), an early and sustained intervention (initial job search appraisal from the first week, with job search questionnaire and plan completed) and a well-resourced delivery (a job search coach or coordinator to work with groups and one-to-one with clients).

Project colleges were enhancing their job search programmes through:

- a client forum to gain feedback on job search facilities and recommendations for change to the established format of delivery
- close liaison with job centre for intensive job search towards the end of training
- integrating New Deal within the vocational programme centre so that all initial contact is made within the programme centre and clients are referred to a job programme not a training programme
- reviewing clients against distance travelled in relation to employability. Linkage with district ES to promote job opportunities to clients as part of the programme
- job search appraisal
- action plans linking outcome to training
- the development of employability skills as appropriate, with additional support available through the learning support team.

Improving practice

Colleges could consider:

- better marketing of FTET as a jobs programme with vocational education and training
- more one-to-one support including the use of a New Deal Personal Trainer as a mentor to focus on identified needs.

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CASE STUDY
Job shop

An area of West Cheshire College's learning centre has been set aside as a job shop where New Deal clients can access resources, materials and experienced staff to assist them in their job search activities. The area will be permanently staffed from summer 2001 when the New Deal team relocate to the learning centre.

Clients are assisted with CV preparation, applications, job hunting on the internet, interview technique, and so on. All clients undergo an employability audit and from this a job search action plan is produced. The clients' action plan can include activities such as researching a particular area of work, finding out about working conditions, pay structure, codes of practice, and so on, or it can be as relatively simple as collecting and comparing job advertisements.

The agreed activities are based upon the clients' individual needs and are reviewed at regular intervals. Job search modules, accessible via the college intranet, support the clients' work and form a backdrop to their job search training. Speakers (recruitment agency personnel, human resource practitioners, industry representatives, for example) are also invited in to the job shop to talk to small, informal groups of clients. The work-place adviser is based here and maintains a database of local employer contacts. She actively markets clients to employers, supports the clients into employment and maintains close contact with the employer while the client is in the initial, transitional period from benefit to work.

New Deal clients are engaged in a wide range of vocational areas in college from Engineering to Hotel and Catering, from Business Administration to Social Care. The job shop is available to all students on ES programmes.

Critical success factors

There have been two main critical success factors.

- Job search training is started as early as possible in the programme. Some clients are reluctant to do job search because they rationalise FTET as 'doing a course' or 'learning a skill'. Job search tends to be seen as scouring the papers for jobs and submitting applications. Some clients do not automatically accept that job search training can assist them to take a much more proactive attitude to job hunting. If they have sound knowledge of an area of work this encourages confidence at interview and improves awareness of local employment market trends and, in turn, directs their job seeking activities towards more potentially fruitful goals.
- There is regular, advertised, staff presence in the job shop. Advice is on hand, as well as encouragement to take part in the activities. We also work alongside our student services careers advisers as we see job shop activity benefiting significantly from as much professional input as possible, and it gives us the opportunity to pool some existing resources.

CASE STUDY continued

Resources

The project has been partially funded by the LSDA New Deal Innovation Fund. The fund has provided us with a part-time workplace adviser (the other half of whose job is work experience supervisor on New Deal) and enabled us to purchase extra resources. We also combined with our Student Services colleagues to provide extra staffing and resource assistance. The accommodation was already available in the college learning centre but it was under-used until the job shop became fully operational with the help of the project funding.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

The job shop helped to improve our 'turnaround' time (from referral to start of programme) because it means that we can take clients into college and provide activity for them if their main programme of study is not immediately available. This is the first year of the project and we will have a much better idea of any improvement in job outcome rates this summer 2001 or next spring 2002 (the bulk of our students still come to us at traditional college start times).

Retention has improved overall, compared with last year. We have had fewer FTET clients but they have mostly been the 'harder to help' individuals – people with unsettled domestic lives, exhibiting a range of emotional and psychological difficulties. Smaller numbers have also meant that we have been able to give more in-depth and timely support to clients. The job shop is a part of this process, not only in terms of well-targeted job search training and activity but also through providing a defined space to meet clients, where they are encouraged to feel they have some 'ownership' of their programme activity.

Quality indicators

Quality indicators include:

- student feedback – mainly verbal at present but we will have a better indicator this summer (2001) when the bulk of the clients complete their student feedback forms on their New Deal programmes; those who have completed forms already give a positive response
- rates of use – the job shop is also a preferred and identifiable meeting place for clients seeing members of the New Deal team
- improved take up of job search activity among clients
- improved retention rates.

Trainee achievement and progression

6

Learners need to be set challenging targets and to be aware that they are making good progress in achieving them. This requires effective management information and a regular monitoring system. Advice and counselling may help to guide learners towards the opportunities available to them on completion of their studies or training.

Supporting positive progression

Present good practice

The project identified examples of good practice in this area. These included:

- Early introduction of the support services available to clients for assistance with any concerns, in an attempt to offer guidance as an alternative to early drop out.
- One-to-one discussions held to ensure clients' expectations are satisfied. A systematic programme of reviews between client and tutor, preferably held monthly or more frequently, monitors progress towards milestones and assesses progress. Timesheets are monitored daily to spot patterns of non-attendance or cause for immediate concern. Where this is the case, the monthly review cycle is brought to one per week until normal attendance patterns resume.
- Reviews which include the coordinator, New Deal Personal Adviser and client.
- MIS systems that record reviews held and expected significant future dates.
- Ensuring NDPAs are included where problems are identified, to assist in retention and secure a partnership approach to decision making.
- Recording MAAP assessment results to identify potential at-risk clients.
- Intensive job search during latter weeks of the New Deal Programme to assist in the transition process.
- Actively encouraging attendance at job search workshops during the training period, to provide relaxed, non-threatening support in job seeking.
- Thorough job search reviews, which increase in frequency towards the end of an option. As a result the client has a firm action plan on leaving the FTET option.

- Increased attendance in the college's programme centre for all clients without an agreed job outcome to enhance their potential in gaining employment.
- Liaison with NDPA in last six weeks of study.
- All clients receive an exit guidance review at which future opportunities of training are discussed, and advice offered about the potential use of follow through to expand vocational opportunities and training.

Strategic planning and management of training

7

Good practice features

Good practice in delivering the New Deal FTET option requires a sound and effective structure of management within which it can operate. This should encompass the entire unit of delivery, with the aim of establishing an effective and cooperative partnership between all partners in the unit of delivery and all sections across the college, with good communications, clear and agreed responsibilities and expectations. The management of training should focus on securing effective provision to serve the interests, capacities and needs of the learner and foster effective learning.

Partnership within the unit of delivery (UoD)

Partnership and consortia are an important part of New Deal Provision and may productively engage in complex tasks and so share the workload, for example, Bournemouth and Poole Consortium collected labour market information (LMI) data to forecast needs of the local labour market and the sector or occupational area.

CASE STUDY

A partnership approach through consortia

In April 1998 a consortium was established to work in partnership with the Employment Service to deliver the New Deal 18–24 FTET option. The consortium involved a wide range of partners representing colleges, charities and private training providers. These were Bournemouth and Poole College (lead partner), Kingston Maurward College, Weymouth College, the Arts Institute, Advanced Training Associates, NACRO – New Careers Training, and Bournemouth Churches Housing Association.

This partnership represents the first example in Dorset of the private and public sector working together for the benefit of the learner, with a clear focus on outcomes and a culture of continuous improvement. The combined resources of the consortium are good and this model has provided the opportunity for smaller, specialist providers to remain involved and have a stronger voice. ESF funding is accessed through the college and is used by all the consortium partners.

The partnership approach saves money as duplication in areas such as claims, audit, monitoring and evaluation are avoided, as all are managed centrally by the lead provider.

CASE STUDY continued

Critical success factors

A close working relationship was encouraged between all members of the consortium and the Employment Service. This has continued to develop in successive years, with regular meetings with consortium members and the ES – including personal advisers – to discuss how quality can be improved and the needs of clients be fully met. Key factors for the consortium to consider were a full geographical coverage and securing provision in all vocational areas.

It was essential to develop a sense of trust and bring all members of the consortium together. At the initial stages it was agreed where partners could work together and where competition would exist. Client referrals are sent directly to each partner from the Employment Service, not via the lead partner, to ensure fairness. Clients move between partner organisations to ensure the most appropriate training is available at any given time.

A quality development group is working to ensure that best practice from each organisation is shared with the partnership.

Resources

ESF additionality funding has been used to resource a wide range of training and equipment that otherwise would not have been available to New Deal clients from basic funding:

- Additional qualifications have significantly enhanced the employability prospects of many clients, including First Aid, Life Saving and Lifeguard Qualifications, Languages, Firefighting, FA Coaching certificate, Food Hygiene, GCSEs, Gas Safety, and so on.
- Other resources have been provided, such as driving tuition and tests, clothing (for interviews and to start work), tools and equipment for employment, extra books and stationery, outdoor activity and team building days, assistance with transport (provision of bicycles and extra on-programme support). This additional support has helped clients greatly in securing and keeping employment as well as improving retention rates.

ES contracts have funded the mainstream training activity.

An 8% management fee is charged to partners each month to support the cost of a manager, administrator, office space and the resources required to run the New Deal office.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal

All areas of performance have continually improved year on year.
Since the commencement of New Deal in April 1998:

- successful completions, including job completions, have increased from 14% to 38%
- individual training plan completions have increased from 12% to 62%
- non-achiever rate has decreased from 85% to 45%
- retention rate has increased from 18% to 63%
- average length of stay has increased from 11 weeks to 33 weeks.

These figures, aggregated over the three years of the option, compare favourably with New Deal benchmarking data.

CASE STUDY continued

Indicators of improved quality

The continued improvements in the year-on-year performance indicators above demonstrate a measure of success.

A recent inspection by the ALI in April 2001 confirmed a good performance throughout the New Deal provision, with some of the highest grades awarded to date nationally.

The New Deal consortium approach has proved successful and has continued to develop over several years including improvements in quality of delivery.

The consortium approach was then extended to include Gateway to Work contracts, which also proved to be successful, and this year the consortium was extended to include more training organisations and is now delivering the contract throughout Dorset for the new work-based learning for adults (WBLA) and New Deal 25+ programmes.

Barriers to good practice

Current contracting and funding models can segment the delivery of the various components of an individual's New Deal programme. The local accountability for delivery may be unclear. The contracted partner within the unit of delivery may deliver independently and compete for clients' referrals. Communication links between partners have not focused on individual client needs and quality of delivery, but more on contract compliance.

Improving practice

Effective communication between the provider and the Employment Service at operational and strategic level is vital to good practice. A strategic group within the UoD and at district level could address:

- local labour market skill requirements
- employers' views on training needs and how these should be met
- quality standards for planned provision
- communication lines between all partners of the UoD (to avoid duplication of tasks by the learner and gaps in information between Gateway and training providers).

Membership of the group should include providers of FTET and other New Deal options to ensure that ways of meeting the needs identified are appropriate and achievable. ES representation at all consortium or partnership meetings and membership of UoD steering group would be useful.

Strategic partnerships could also contribute to the coherence of the provision. These partnerships should include:

- ES district managers
- district quality improvement managers (advisers)
- NDPAs, customer service managers, etc
- employer representative bodies, eg from the Small Business Service (SBS) and National Training Organisation (NTO)

- regional development agencies
- any other agencies with a vested interest – Probation Services, Social Services
- providers delivering the New Deal programme – private, voluntary and community providers, college, etc.

The Strategic Partnership Group needs to consider and inform:

- provider self-assessment and development planning
- ALI inspection
- monitoring and reviews by ES staff, etc.

Operational partnership

Regular contact at an operational level between partners may build strong links and improve support and development. Operational partnerships should include:

- a district quality team
- NDPA and provider to consider local issues and address input from a national level, encouraging input from staff delivering Gateway
- providers delivering New Deal options (practitioners)
- other WBLA providers.

Developing the service in partnership

Development activities at operational level should include client advisers, provider support staff and New Deal coordinators working together to consolidate and identify exemplary practice.

Other development activity could include:

- focused networks, which may build on existing networks of FTET providers
- managing and implementing bespoke programmes for small numbers of clients
- induction into FTET, placements and employment
- mentoring (peer mentors at college, placement mentors, post-employment mentors)
- learner-centred delivery
- managing early leavers
- linking on and off the job learning and assessment
- progression routes and destinations.

Present good practice

The following actions have been undertaken by some colleges to inform strategic objectives and assist in meeting them:

- developing links with the community through outreach projects involving ES, community agencies, gateway providers and colleges
- establishing a dedicated team of New Deal training advisers within the college to manage a caseload of clients and monitor attendance, achievement and progression
- appointing employment development advisers (a hybrid of work placement officers) to deliver a structured job search programme of six weekly one-to-one sessions with clients, and research employers or jobs
- tailoring learning programmes to meet local labour market needs.

Staff development

8

Good practice features

Staff involved in New Deal need a range of skills to deliver a high quality service. This includes subject knowledge, empathy with the client group, and awareness of the structure and requirements of the programme. The professional development of staff to increase their understanding of the particular demands of the FTET option contributes significantly to the effective delivery of the programme. Access to appropriate training opportunities is crucial to ensure staff have the necessary vocational, training and assessment skills.

Briefing and updating staff on New Deal developments

Present good practice

Some examples of good practice are described below.

- Professional development, including awareness of New Deal and all its activities, is provided for all involved in the delivery of vocational training and support. This emphasises inclusive learning and widening participation issues, ensuring a cross-college approach.
- The production in one college of a booklet for staff to inform them of the New Deal process, with frequent updates in the staff bulletins.
- Information on New Deal being posted on the college intranet to keep staff up to date with developments.
- Regular meetings held between a college's training provider staff and college delivery staff to ensure that information relating to clients and the programme are communicated. There is a regular forum for staff to address issues and requirements of the New Deal programme, including job search, placements and employment.
- As part of the development of an OCN programme called New Vocational Horizons (NVH) staff produced materials that would be targeted at New Deal clients among others. It gave the staff an excellent opportunity to understand clients' needs and prepare assignments to meet them.

Improving practice

Measures to improve practice could include:

- providing a staff handbook to inform staff and establish equal status for all New Deal and work-based training
- holding UoD briefings for providers across the options, incorporating practical and development tools to support practitioners
- creating discrete working groups within the college provider network to develop a common approach and encourage consistency.

Updating pedagogic and vocational skills

Barriers to good practice

Declining numbers of New Deal clients referred through the Gateway, coupled with overly bureaucratic and costly procedures, have lowered the reputation of New Deal and negatively affected the attitude of college staff.

The overarching concern expressed by colleges is the current value attached to New Deal delivery within the college and the low income and high costs associated with delivery, together with the relative difficulty in influencing the ES and peripatetic staff. The skills and experience of staff delivering the New Deal do not always meet those required by the client group. New Deal clients may have challenging and complex development needs, both personal and learning, and these are often difficult for some staff to address.

Present good practice

The project identified examples of good practice, including:

- the identification of staff training needs taking account of developments in many areas, including policy changes, quality improvements, ES directives, contract management and new initiatives
- the production of a detailed pack on all procedures for new staff and shadowing for new training advisers with existing staff to familiarise themselves with these procedures. All new staff in the college have induction and training for New Deal
- staff involved in the delivery of New Deal encouraged to develop personal skills in a wide range of activities to support the client. Such training includes counselling skills, psychometric testing, managing disruptive behaviour, equal opportunities and basic skills. Staff managing and delivering New Deal have the relevant skills and qualifications, eg:
  - TDLB D32/33/34/36
  - TDLB NVQ 3 and 4 in Training
  - C&G 7307, C&G 9281
  - individual guidance and advice courses
  - management training, including personnel, finance and training.

- Worcester College of Technology's appraisal system addresses development needs arising from New Deal. Strategic direction is provided by the JVP (Joint Venture partnership) and region. Annual appraisal leads to an individual development programme for all staff. Training is also provided to staff when necessary.
- Good practice is shared through liaison officer monthly meetings.
- The college works closely with the ES on all quality, development and performance issues.

CASE STUDY
Staff development

At the College of West Anglia NCT training advisers have established close links with all vocational areas including managers, deputy managers, course directors, tutors and learning support staff. NCT training advisers attend vocational team meetings and Employer Advisory Panel meetings which ensures that NCT are kept up to date on Industry needs and changes in curriculum.

Critical success factors
Significant staff development programmes within College of West Anglia are provided. Within NCT some training advisers are qualified to BPS Level A (Psychometric Testing), or hold a certificate in Counselling in Development of Learning. TDBL Level 3 training is set as a minimum standard. Staff have also attended intensive workshops on initial assessment and equal opportunities and these are ongoing developments. All training advisers will be trained to NVQ Level 3 in Information, Advice and Guidance.

Resources
The College of West Anglia has a substantial Inset budget, which is allocated to Faculties and Departments; most areas of training are resourced through this.

Other sources of funding are through local LSCs (formerly TECs) as they hold regular workshops on areas such as initial assessment, training plan development and other subjects which all ultimately benefit the clients.

Impact on the delivery of New Deal
As a result of significant personal problems, a particular client was going to drop out of New Deal, until the training adviser and the counsellor increased their support. The client subsequently achieved a full qualification and progressed to university.

Indicators of improved quality
During the recent New Deal inspection, evaluation of client feedback indicated that client support is good. This judgement was further verified by the TSC inspection report where a Grade 2 in Client Support was awarded.

Improving practice

Generic training sessions for all staff delivering New Deal is required. These should be developed in cooperation with ES. Specialised training in dealing with demotivated learners may be required by a wide range of staff involved with New Deal. Specific updating in job search, interview techniques and working with employers may be needed by staff working on New Deal.

Quality improvement

9

Good practice features

The development of good practice is dependent on an understanding of and shared commitment to, continuous improvement by all providers in the UoD. Self-assessment and personal commitment to development plans promote individual improvement, while continuous improvement within the college is helped by regular reviews and appraisals of delivery against ES requirements and the Common Inspection Framework to assess the impact of the learning provision. This is supported by informed feedback from trainees and employers on provider performance.

Self-assessment and development plans

Present good practice

The providers' self-assessment report (SAR) should include a separate section for New Deal reporting and action planning, in accordance with the Common Inspection Framework and requirements of the Adult Learning Inspectorate.

Providers need to ensure that:

- client tracking data is collected and maintained either through spreadsheets or a specific software package such as ProAchieve, currently used within the college, to monitor and predict retention, achievement, and jobs outcomes; packages such as ProAchieve also has the benefit of providing multi-user access and benchmarking against national data
- college coordinates 'best practice' team meetings involving all the key staff involved in delivery, review and placements.

Barriers to good practice

Inspection, monitoring and contract compliance have historically focused on varied and sometimes contradictory quality thresholds. Change in the design and delivery of government-funded provision was proposed in the DfEE's consultation on *Raising standards in post-16 learning* (DfEE, May–July 2000).

The delivery of New Deal, particularly FTET, poses particular challenges to continuous improvement in quality of delivery and outcome. College staff expressed concern that insufficient weight is given to further training for clients, as this may be part of a longer ladder of progression to a job outcome.

Varying views on what constitutes quality may be particularly difficult to reconcile, given the nature of the client group and the range of partner organisations involved in New Deal delivery, but they need further attention and discussion.

Improving practice

Good practice could be developed by:

- implementing clear systems and procedures, agreed and understood by all parties, including ES, partners, sub-contractors and clients
- regular auditing of sub-contractors delivering learning and assessment in line with internal quality systems
- integrating the FTET and other New Deal provision into the college quality assurance (QA) procedures, in line with international quality standards
- including service agreements, advice for employers and monthly reporting figures in the QA system to encompass service levels, retention and achievement rates and job outcomes; with these figures being communicated to all relevant staff
- using ongoing internal and external monitoring and review process to monitor effective implementation of action plans
- using effective benchmarking at regional and national level to support the development and focus of New Deal FTET to meet ES and client aims (as identified in the individual learner plan).

Provider performance

Good practice features

Feedback from trainees and employers on provider performance informs targets and improves strategies.

Barriers to good practice

The key issues for providers are the lack of employer participation in the evaluation process and the low level of return and poor quality of information from leaver questionnaires, which reduces its statistical significance.

Some confusion between clients' dissatisfaction with the New Deal programme, rather than with the college course, may also skew the evaluation of client satisfaction.

Present good practice

The project identified examples of good practice.These included:

- employer's views are surveyed at the end of work experience to elicit satisfaction levels. Reviews with clients supplement this during the on-programme phase
- clients' questionnaires are used at induction and completion of the FTET option, to identify satisfaction levels and provide suggestions for improvements or changes
- feedback is sought from the ES through the NDPAs who participate in the clients' exit interviews, managed by the staff delivering New Deal within the college
- student focus groups 'test out' feedback and solicit further comment from the users
- information gathered is used to inform the SAR and actions are included within the self-assessment and development planning process.

Improving practice

Colleges could improve their practice by:

- working closely with ES to try to develop a more uniform system of collecting and reporting statistics for local and national benchmarking
- supplementing a postal questionnaire to all leavers with personal visits for evaluation process
- building strong relationships with clients to improve the quality of response during their time at college
- developing a standardised model of good practice for the consortium or the UoD to compare results and share with partners.

APPENDIX 1

Case studies – contact details

Individual action planning
Lancaster and Morecambe College
Morecambe Road, Lancaster LA1 2TY
Contact Aidan Maguire
Tel 01524 521410 Fax 01524 842989
a.maguire@lanmore.ac.uk

Customised learning
Lancaster and Morecambe College
Morecambe Road, Lancaster LA1 2TY
Contact Aidan Maguire
Tel 01524 521410 Fax 01524 842989
a.maguire@lanmore.ac.uk

Client guidance and support
Consortium of Staffordshire College
Moorland Road, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs ST6 1JJ
Contact Geoff Riley, Project Director; Pamela Brown, Projects Manager
Tel 01782 603179 Fax 01782 603197
grile1sc@stokecoll.ac.uk
pbrow1sc@stokecoll.ac.uk

Using MAAP to assess client commitment
Worcester College of Technology
All Saints Building, Deansway, Worcester WR12 2JF
Contact Gerard Stone
Tel 01905 725758 Fax 01905 26358
gstone@wortech.ac.uk

New vocational horizons
Consortium of Staffordshire College
Moorland Road, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs ST6 1JJ
Contact Geoff Riley, Project Director; Pamela Brown, Projects Manager
Tel 01782 603179 Fax 01782 603197
grile1sc@stokecoll.ac.uk
pbrow1sc@stokecoll.ac.uk

Meeting client needs
Colchester Institute
Sheepen Road, Colchester CO3 3LL
Contact Judith Wheeler, Ali Forsythe
Tel 01206 518720 Fax 01206 518720
judith.wheeler@colch-inst.ac.uk

Customised learning through a unitised curriculum
Newcastle College
Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA
Contact Aileen Surtees
Tel 01912 004320 Fax 01912 004558
asurtees@ncl-coll.ac.uk

Key skills
Newcastle College
Rye Hill Campus, Scotswood Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 7SA
Contact Aileen Surtees
Tel 01912 004320 Fax 01912 004558
asurtees@ncl-coll.ac.uk

Assessment key and basic skills
Lancaster and Morecambe College
Morecambe Road, Lancaster LA1 2TY
Contact Aidan Maguire
Tel 01524 521410 Fax 01524 842989
a.maguire@lanmore.ac.uk

Buddy system
Blackpool and the Fylde College
Ashfield Road, Bispham, Blackpool, Lancashire FY3 7LR
Contact Ava Lefton
Tel 01253 352352 Fax 01253 356127
ale@blackpool.ac.uk

Monitoring and tracking
Uxbridge College
Uxbridge Community Campus, Park Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1NQ
Contact Beverley Bailey
Tel 01895 853527 Fax 01895 853636
bbailey@uxbridge.ac.uk

Workplace mentors
West Cheshire College
Eaton Road, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7ER
Contact Liz Shore, Ann Usher
Tel 01244 677677 Fax 01244 670676
e.shore@west-cheshire.ac.uk

Work preparation
Uxbridge College
Uxbridge Community Campus, Park Road, Uxbridge, Middlesex UB8 1NQ
Contact Beverley Bailey
Tel 01895 853527 Fax 01895 853636
bbailey@uxbridge.ac.uk

Work preparation – individual support
Bournemouth and Poole College
Redland, Knyveton Road, Bournemouth BH1 3QU
Contact Roger Simons
Tel 01202 465454 Fax 01202 465510
rsimons@bpc.ac.uk

Job shop
West Cheshire College
Eaton Road, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7ER
Contact Liz Shore, Ann Usher
Tel 01244 677677 Fax 01244 670676
e.shore@west-cheshire.ac.uk

A partnership approach through consortia
Bournemouth and Poole College
Redland, Knyveton Road, Bournemouth BH1 3QU
Contact Roger Simons
Tel 01202 465454 Fax 01202 465510
rsimons@bpc.ac.uk

Staff development
College of West Anglia (NCT)
Tennyson Avenue, King's Lynn, Norfolk PE30 2Q
Contact Anna Browell
Tel 01553 761144 Fax 01553 769329
abrowell@col-westanglia.ac.uk

APPENDIX 2

Project steering group members

John Atkinson
Institute for Employment Studies
Mantell Building, Falmer, Brighton BN1 9RF
Tel 01273 873680 Fax 01273 690430
john.atkinson@employment-studies.co.uk

Tony Berry
Employment Service
JMSD6, Mayfield Court, Level 2, 56 West Street, Sheffield S1 4EP
Tel 0114 259 5881 Fax 0114 259 6653

Carol Burgess
Project Consultant
Learning and Skills Development Agency
3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EF

Nadine Cartner
Association for College Management
10 De Montfort Street, Leicester LE1 7GG
Tel 0116 275 5076 Fax 0116 255 0548

Maria Hughes
Learning and Skills Development Agency
3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EF
Tel 020 7840 5309 Fax 020 7840 5401
mhughes@LSDA.org.uk

Jean Macdonald
Learning and Skills Council
Quality Improvement Research Team
101 Lockhurst Lane, Foleshill, Coventry CV6 5SF
Tel 024 7670 3263
jean.macdonald@ lsc.gov.uk

Aubrey Magill
Department for Education and Skills
Skills for Employability
Fourth floor, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ
Aubrey.MAGILL@dfes.gov.uk

Michael Ratcliffe
Learning and Skills Development Agency
3 Citadel Place, Tinworth Street, London SE11 5EF
Tel 020 7840 5334 Fax 020 7840 5401
mratcliffe@LSDA.org.uk

Alison Rowland
Learning and Skills Council
Quality Improvement Research Team
101 Lockhurst Lane, Foleshill, Coventry CV6 5SF
Tel 024 7670 3243
alison.rowland@lsc.gov.uk

Timothy Smith
Training Standards Council (now Adult Learning Inspectorate)
101, Lockhurst Lane, Coventry CV6 5SF
Tel 024 7658 2571 Fax 024 7666 7093
tim.smith@ali.gov.uk

APPENDIX 3

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACM Association for College Management
ALI Adult Learning Inspectorate
APA Accreditation of Prior Achievement
APA/L Accredited Prior Achievement/Learning
BSA Basic Skills Agency
CLAIT Computer Literacy and Information Technology
ES Employment Service
ESF European Social Fund
FAST Foundation Accreditation in Science and Technology
FE further education
FEFC Further Education Funding Council
FTET full-time education and training
HE higher education
HTML hypertext mark-up language
IAP individual action plan
IES Institute for Employment Studies
ILP individual learning plan
LMI labour market information
LSC Learning and Skills Council
MAAP motivation, ambition, aptitude and perseverance
MIS management information system
NACRO National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NCFE National Council for Further Education
NDPA New Deal personal adviser
NDPT New Deal personal trainer
NTO National Training Organisation
NVH New Vocational Horizons
OCN Open College Network
OCNNWM Open College Network North West Midlands
PDP personal development plan
QA quality assurance
RoA record of achievement
RWE realistic work environment
SAR self-assessment report
SBS Small Business Service
SMT senior management team

TSC (ALI) Training Standards Council (Adult Learning Inspectorate)

UoD unit of delivery

WBLA Work Based Learning for Adults

New Deal is a test of providers' ability to respond flexibly and effectively to the needs of individuals who are disengaged from the learning process. These guidelines show what can be done to develop and improve the quality of the full-time education and training (FTET) option within the New Deal for 18–24 year olds. They identify features of high quality provision and principles of effective delivery, together with case studies and suggestions for further improving practice. These guidelines aim to assist providers of FTET New Deal programmes and the partners with which they work to share and develop good practice.

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